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Moscow Missile Defense System Goes on an Alert

1. On 23 July Western attaches observed a Moscow missile site southwest of the city with missiles on all pads. On 14 July, slightly more than a week earlier, two other sites were overflown south of Moscow and it was reported that "...all pads occupied, unable to determine whether missiles or launching ramps". In the latter case, the cable gives equal likelihood that what was observed were ramps which would not be unusual from past sightings. However, in view of the 23 July observation at another location on the outer Moscow ring, the Moscow defense system appears to be on a continuing air defense alert status.

2. Although we currently estimate that the Moscow system was operational by the end of 1956, repeated observations of the sites have consistently failed to reveal more than a few missiles on a site at a given time. Observation of one of the above sites made as recently as late June revealed no missiles on the pads or activity at the site. It is noteworthy that this unprecedented activity on the Moscow ring has coincided with the crisis in the Mid-East and that the first sighting on July 14 coincided with the coup in Iraq.

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